

Housing Profile

Neighborhood Study Committee:	Willie Bloomstein, Fred Meyer Debby Galef, Joel Bard
Absent:	Dave Wood, Ross Hoffman, Miriam Goldberg, Amy Barad
Community Development Department:	Elizabeth Sternberg Venita Mathias
Harvard University	Travis McCready

Venita introduced Elizabeth Sternberg, Project Manager in the Community Development Department Housing Division. Elizabeth said that since 1995, the City has embarked on a comprehensive housing strategy to create and preserve housing in the City of Cambridge. Twenty million dollars in direct city subsidies are distributed through the City Home program. Currently, 16% of the City's entire housing stock is considered affordable for residents earning below 80% of the area median income.

There are several nonprofits that develop and construct affordable housing throughout Cambridge: Homeowner's Rehab, Inc. (HRI), Cambridge Neighborhood Apartment and Housing Services (CNAHS), Just A Start Corporation (JAS), Cambridge and Somerville Cooperative Apartment Program (CASCAP), and the Cambridge Housing Authority (CHA). The City and housing nonprofits maintain a database of available housing units and a waiting list of applicants.

Recent housing construction by non-profits: HRI is developing Auburn Court, mixed-income rental housing located in Cambridgeport. CASCAP developed Harvard Manor a 21-unit assisted living development for very-low income elders. JAS developed 12 units of low-income rental housing at 2525 Massachusetts Avenue. The CHA recently constructed affordable rental housing on Garfield Street in the Agassiz neighborhood. Since the end of rent control in 1993, Harvard University has given the City 100 units of rental housing which are managed through HRI. Each development is funded from a variety of public sources with different requirements.

City non-profits have also been directly involved in preserving affordable units in privately owned 'expiring use' buildings that have received federal loans. Owners of the buildings are allowed to prepay the very low mortgages after 20 years. HRI, in partnership with tenant groups, recently purchased 808 Memorial Drive, a 212-unit expiring use building, with capital grants from the federal government.

The City's Affordable Housing Trust is an independent board appointed by the City Manager that grants deferred loans, makes funding decisions and guides City housing policy. Harvard University has recently given the City a 6 million-dollar loan that is distributed through the Affordable Housing Trust. The funds will be used to create home ownership opportunities for Cambridge residents who earn between 80% and 100% of the area median income.

The City enacted an inclusionary zoning ordinance a year and one-half ago. The ordinance requires that in any development of 10 or more housing units, 15% must be set aside as affordable. The housing cost for eligible tenants must take up no more than 30% of their household income. (\$35,000 for one person and \$50,000 for a 4-person household). The federal Housing and Urban Development Department sets the income guidelines. In exchange, the developer would receive a density bonus: for every affordable unit built, the developer would be allowed to build a market rate unit. The density bonus is offered because the City, under federal law, has to offset any action by providing just compensation.